

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Attorney Marilyn Khorsandi on March 24, 2010.

Claims 1-10, 12-13, 15-18, and 21-52 of the application have been amended as follows:

Claims 1-10 (Canceled)

Claims 12-13 (Canceled)

Claims 15-18 (Canceled)

Claims 21-26 (Canceled)

27. (New) A computer-implemented method for a first class mail piece tracking provider to provide, to a plurality of customers of the first class mail piece tracking provider, tracking of individual outbound first class mail pieces respectively initiated in a mail stream by respective customers of the plurality of customers, said computer-implemented method implemented using a computer-based postage system programmed for operation on behalf of the first class mail piece tracking provider, said computer-based postage system available for communication with each respective customer of the plurality of customers, said computer-implemented method comprising:

receiving, by the computer-based postage system, from a particular customer of the plurality of customers of the first class mail piece tracking provider, a request for a computer-based postage indicium to mail a particular first class mail piece to a delivery address;

determining, by the computer-based postage system, a delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address;

searching, by the computer-based postage system, a computer-accessible memory for a previously-used first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising the delivery address identifier, a highest-previously-used subscriber identifier, and a highest-previously-used mailing identifier;

modifying, by the computer-based postage system, at least one of the highest-previously-used subscriber identifier and the highest-previously-used mailing identifier until determining, by the computer-based postage system, a next first class mail piece tracking identifier that has not been used during a particular period of time, said next first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising the delivery address identifier, a final version of the subscriber identifier, and a final version of the mailing identifier;

assigning, by the computer-based postage system, the next first class mail piece tracking identifier to the particular first class mail piece;

generating the computer-based postage indicium according to the request for the computer-based postage indicium; and

creating, by the computer-based postage system, a particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology, separate from said computer-based postage indicium, said

particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology encoding the next first class mail piece tracking identifier;

wherein the highest-previously-used subscriber identifier and the final version of the subscriber identifier are from a group of a plurality of subscriber identifiers that have been assigned to the first class mail piece tracking provider, the plurality of subscriber identifiers identifying the first class mail piece tracking provider in a tracking service authorized by a postal authority.

28. (New) A computer program product, comprising a non-transitory computer-readable medium having a computer-readable program code embodied therein, said computer-readable program code adapted to be executed by a computer system to implement a method for a first class mail piece tracking provider to provide, to a plurality of customers of the first class mail piece tracking provider, tracking of individual outbound first class mail pieces respectively initiated in a mail stream by respective customers of the plurality of customers, said computer system programmed for operation on behalf of the first class mail piece tracking provider, said computer system available for communication with each respective customer of the plurality of customers, said method comprising:

receiving from a particular customer of the plurality of customers of the first class mail piece tracking provider, a request for a computer-based postage indicium to mail a particular first class mail piece to a delivery address;

determining a delivery address identifier corresponding to the delivery address;

searching a computer-accessible memory for a previously-used first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising the delivery address identifier, a highest-previously-used subscriber identifier, and a highest-previously-used mailing identifier;

modifying at least one of the highest-previously-used subscriber identifier and the highest-previously-used mailing identifier until determining a next first class mail piece tracking identifier that has not been used during a particular period of time, said next first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising the delivery address identifier, a final version of the subscriber identifier, and a final version of the mailing identifier;

assigning the next first class mail piece tracking identifier to the particular first class mail piece;

generating the computer-based postage indicium according to the request for the computer-based postage indicium; and

creating a particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology, separate from said computer-based postage indicium, said particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology encoding the next first class mail piece tracking identifier;

wherein the highest-previously-used subscriber identifier and the final version of the subscriber identifier are from a group of a plurality of subscriber identifiers that have been assigned to the first class mail piece tracking provider, the plurality of subscriber identifiers identifying the first class mail piece tracking provider in a tracking service authorized by a postal authority.

29. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 27, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

facilitating, by the computer-based postage system, fixing the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology in a visual medium, said visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece.

30. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 29, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

physically associating the visual medium in which the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology is fixed with the particular first class mail piece.

31. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 30, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

receiving, by the computer-based postage system, a request from the particular customer for tracking information regarding the particular first class mail piece.

32. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 31, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

searching, by the computer-based postage system, a set of scan records comprising records of scans of a plurality of machine-readable tracking graphic symbologies performed by the postal authority for a first class mail piece tracking identifier that matches the next first class mail piece tracking identifier.

33. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 32, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

determining, by the computer-based postage system, that a particular scan record comprises the first class mail piece tracking identifier that matches the next first class mail piece tracking identifier; and

reporting, by the computer-based postage system, to the particular customer, a set of tracking information associated with the particular scan record.

34. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 27, wherein the delivery address identifier is obtained from Internet-based postage delivery address information.

35. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 27, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

formatting, by the computer-based postage system, the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology as a bar code for print-rendering as a label for the particular first class mail piece.

36. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 35, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

physically associating the label with the particular first class mail piece.

37. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 27, wherein creating, by the computer-based postage system, the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology comprises creating, by the computer-based postage system, a machine-readable bar code.

38. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 27, said computer-implemented method further comprising:

facilitating, by the computer-based postage system, fixing the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology in a first visual medium, said first visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece; and

facilitating, by the computer-based postage system, fixing the computer-based postage indicium in a second visual medium, said second visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece.

39. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 38, wherein the first visual medium is a first label and wherein the second visual medium is a second label.

40. (New) The computer-implemented method of Claim 27, wherein said next first class mail piece tracking identifier further comprises a tracking service type identifier.

41. (New) The computer program product of Claim 28, said method further comprising:
facilitating fixing the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology in a visual medium, said visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece.

42. (New) The computer program product of Claim 41, said method further comprising:
physically associating the visual medium in which the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology is fixed, with the particular first class mail piece.

43. (New) The computer program product of Claim 42, said method further comprising:
receiving a request from the particular customer for tracking information regarding the particular first class mail piece.

44. (New) The computer program product of Claim 43, said method further comprising:
searching a set of scan records comprising records of scans of a plurality of machine-readable tracking graphic symbologies performed by the postal authority for a first class mail piece tracking identifier that matches the next first class mail piece tracking identifier.

45. (New) The computer program product of Claim 44, said method further comprising:

determining that a particular scan record comprises the first class mail piece tracking identifier that matches the next first class mail piece tracking identifier; and
reporting, to the particular customer, a set of tracking information associated with the particular scan record.

46. (New) The computer program product of Claim 28, wherein the delivery address identifier is obtained from Internet-based postage delivery address information.

47. (New) The computer program product of Claim 28, said method further comprising:

formatting the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology as a bar code for print-rendering as a label for the particular first class mail piece.

48. (New) The computer program product of Claim 47, said method further comprising:

physically associating the label with the particular first class mail piece.

49. (New) The computer program product of Claim 28, wherein creating the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology comprises creating a machine-readable bar code.

50. (New) The computer program product of Claim 28, said method further comprising:

facilitating fixing the particular machine-readable tracking graphic symbology in a first visual medium, said first visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece; and

facilitating fixing the computer-based postage indicium in a second visual medium, said second visual medium adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece.

51. (New) The computer program product of Claim 50, wherein the first visual medium is a first label and wherein the second visual medium is a second label.

52. (New) The computer program product of Claim 28, wherein said next first class mail piece tracking identifier further comprises a tracking service type identifier.

Additional Comment Concerning Drawings

The drawings filed on December 29, 2003, are acceptable subject to correction of the following informalities: The flowcharts in the drawings are in an informal state. Examiner suggests preparing more formal flowcharts with word processing/drawing software such that the flowcharts are no longer in a hand-drawn/handwritten state.

In order to avoid abandonment of this application, correction is required in reply to the Office action. The correction will not be held in abeyance.

INFORMATION ON HOW TO EFFECT DRAWING CHANGES

Replacement Drawing Sheets

Drawing changes must be made by presenting replacement sheets which incorporate the desired changes and which comply with 37 CFR 1.84. An explanation of the changes made must be presented either in the drawing amendments section, or remarks, section of the amendment paper. Each drawing sheet submitted after the filing date of an application must be labeled in the top margin as either "Replacement Sheet" or "New Sheet" pursuant to 37 CFR 1.121(d). A replacement sheet must include all of the figures appearing on the immediate prior version of the sheet, even if only one figure is being amended. The figure or figure number of the amended drawing(s) must not be labeled as "amended." If the changes to the drawing figure(s) are not accepted by the examiner, applicant will be notified of any required corrective action in the next Office action. No further drawing submission will be required, unless applicant is notified.

Identifying indicia, if provided, should include the title of the invention, inventor's name, and application number, or docket number (if any) if an application number has not been assigned to the application. If this information is provided, it must be placed on the front of each sheet and within the top margin.

Annotated Drawing Sheets

A marked-up copy of any amended drawing figure, including annotations indicating the changes made, may be submitted or required by the examiner. The annotated drawing sheet(s) must be clearly labeled as "Annotated Sheet" and must be presented in the amendment or remarks section that explains the change(s) to the drawings.

Timing of Corrections

Applicant is required to submit acceptable corrected drawings within the time period set in the Office action. See 37 CFR 1.85(a). Failure to take corrective action within the set period will result in ABANDONMENT of the application.

If corrected drawings are required in a Notice of Allowability (PTOL-37), the new drawings MUST be filed within the THREE MONTH shortened statutory period set for reply in the "Notice of Allowability." Extensions of time may NOT be obtained under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 for filing the corrected drawings after the mailing of a Notice of Allowability.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to NATHAN ERB whose telephone number is (571) 272-7606. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on (571) 272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

NATHAN ERB
Examiner
Art Unit 3628

Nhe

/JOHN W HAYES/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3628

Allowable Subject Matter

1. **Examiner-Initiated Interview Summary:** Examiner conducted an examiner-initiated interview with Attorney Marilyn Khorsandi over two telephone calls on March 24, 2010. The topic of the interview was a proposed examiner's amendment faxed to Attorney Khorsandi by Examiner. In that proposed examiner's amendment, examiner had deleted two new claims previously proposed by Attorney Khorsandi. Examiner explained that the reason for the deletions was that Examiner could not find support for those claims in the application as originally filed. Attorney Khorsandi suggested some changes to what claims from which some of the dependent claims depend; Examiner agreed with those changes. Attorney Khorsandi then approved the revised proposed examiner's amendment, which is presented as the examiner's amendment with this Allowance.

2. Claims 27-52 are allowed.

3. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The closest prior art of record is Montgomery, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2003/0101143 A1, and Watson, Neva, "Changes to the Domestic Mail Manual to Implement Confirm (R) -- Service," 67 FR 53454, August 15, 2002.

Montgomery discloses:

- a method of encoding a trackable first class mail piece identifier as a graphic symbology;
- receiving a request by a particular customer user of a plurality of customer users of a computer-based postage provider to print computer-based postage for a

particular first class mail piece for mailing the particular first class mail piece to a particular delivery address, wherein the request to print computer-based postage comprises an indication by the particular customer user to track the particular first class mail piece;

- assigning a tracking identifier to correspond to the particular customer user and to trackably correspond to the particular first class mail piece, wherein the tracking identifier trackably identifies the particular first class mail piece during a particular period of time, wherein the tracking identifier comprises a mailing subscriber identifier corresponding to an authorization to the computer-based postage provider by a postal authority for the computer-based postage provider to create machine-readable first class mailing tracking graphic symbologies, separate from postage indicia, for tracking first class mailings, in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority, the tracking identifier further comprising a mailing identifier, and a delivery address identifier, wherein the delivery address identifier is trackably unique within a combination of the mailing subscriber identifier and the mailing identifier during a period of time;

- encoding the tracking identifier as a machine-readable graphic symbology, separate from computer-based postage indicia, in accordance with the authorization by the postal authority, said machine-readable graphic symbology adapted for fixing in a visual medium that is adapted for physical association with the particular first class mail piece;

- saving in a memory storage a relationship between the tracking identifier and the particular customer user.

Watson discloses wherein a plurality of mailing tracking subscriber identifiers are assigned by the postal authority to a single entity, and identifying from the plurality of mailing tracking subscriber identifiers, a next available mailing tracking subscriber identifier.

As per claims 27-28, the closest prior art of record taken either individually or in combination with other prior art of record fails to teach or suggest searching a computer-accessible memory for a previously-used first class mail piece tracking identifier comprising the delivery address identifier, a highest-previously-used subscriber identifier, and a highest-previously-used mailing identifier; wherein the highest-previously-used subscriber identifier and the final version of the subscriber identifier are from a group of a plurality of subscriber identifiers that have been assigned to the first class mail piece tracking provider, the plurality of subscriber identifiers identifying the first class mail piece tracking provider in a tracking service authorized by a postal authority.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

4. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to NATHAN ERB whose telephone number is (571) 272-7606. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on (571) 272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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